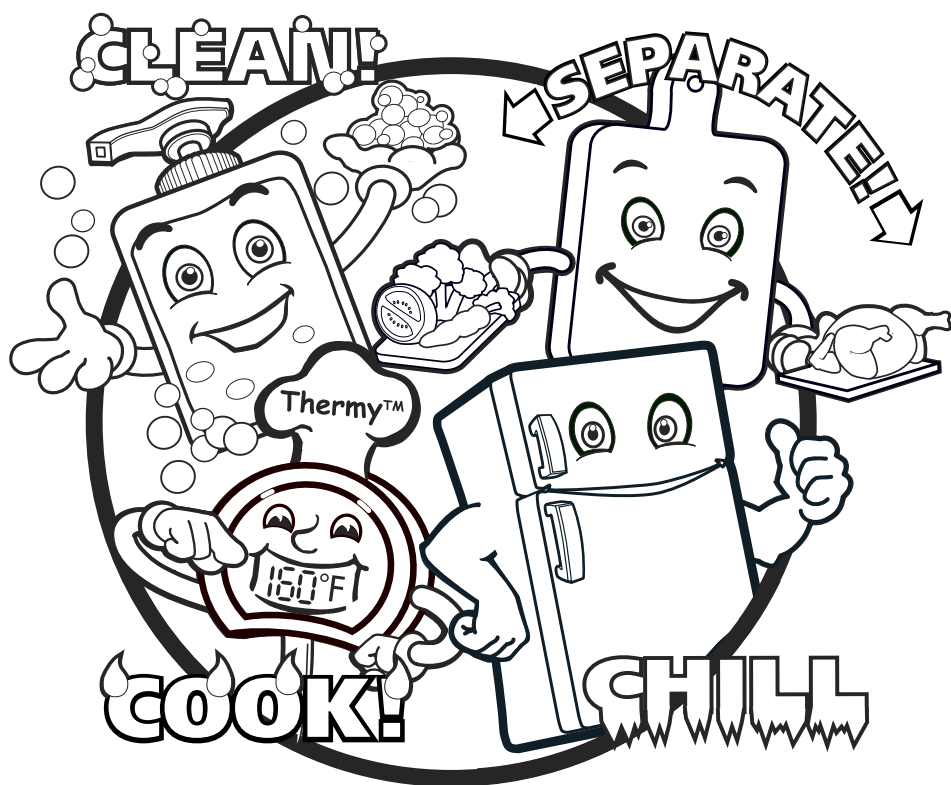


Keep Food Safe!

Food Safety Basics



Safe steps in food handling, cooking, and storage are essential in preventing foodborne illness. You can't see, smell, or taste harmful bacteria that may cause illness. In every step of food preparation, follow the four Fight BAC!® guidelines to keep food safe:

- **Clean**—Wash hands and surfaces often.
- **Separate**—Don't cross-contaminate.
- **Cook**—Cook to proper temperatures, checking with a food thermometer.
- **Chill**—Refrigerate promptly.



Shopping

- Purchase refrigerated or frozen items after selecting your nonperishables.
- Never choose meat or poultry in packaging that is torn or leaking.
- Do not buy food past "Sell-By," "Use-By," or other expiration dates.

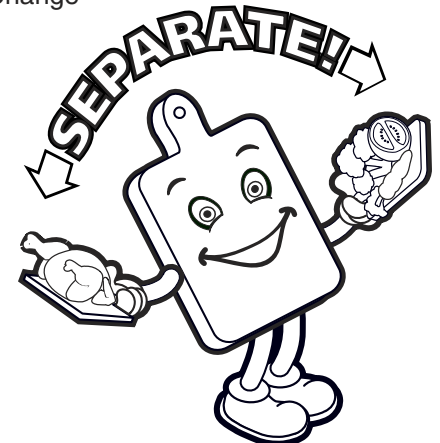


Storage

- Always refrigerate perishable food within 2 hours (1 hour when the temperature is above 90 °F).
- Check the temperature of your refrigerator and freezer with an appliance thermometer. The refrigerator should be at 40 °F or below and the freezer at 0 °F or below.
- Cook or freeze fresh poultry, fish, ground meats, and variety meats within 2 days; other beef, veal, lamb, or pork, within 3 to 5 days.
- Perishable food such as meat and poultry should be wrapped securely to maintain quality and to prevent meat juices from getting onto other food.
- To maintain quality when freezing meat and poultry in its original package, wrap the package again with foil or plastic wrap that is recommended for the freezer.
- In general, high-acid canned food such as tomatoes, grapefruit, and pineapple can be stored unopened on the shelf for 12 to 18 months. Low-acid canned food such as meat, poultry, fish, and most vegetables will keep 2 to 5 years—if the unopened can remains in good condition and has been stored in a cool, clean, and dry place. Discard cans that are dented, leaking, bulging, or rusted.

Thawing

- **Refrigerator**—The refrigerator allows slow, safe thawing. Make sure thawing meat and poultry juices do not drip onto other food.
- **Cold Water**—For faster thawing, place food in a leak-proof plastic bag. Submerge in cold tap water. Change the water every 30 minutes. Cook immediately after thawing.
- **Microwave**—Cook meat and poultry immediately after microwave thawing.



Preparation

- Always wash hands with soap and warm water for 20 seconds before and after handling food.
- Don't cross-contaminate. Keep raw meat, poultry, fish, and their juices away from other food. After cutting raw meats, wash hands, cutting board, knife, and counter tops with hot, soapy water.
- Marinate meat and poultry in a covered dish in the refrigerator.
- Sanitize cutting boards by using a solution of 1 teaspoon chlorine bleach in 1 quart of water.

Cooking

Cook foods to the recommended internal temperatures listed below. Check temperatures with a food thermometer. Learn more about using food thermometers on the FSIS Web site or by calling the USDA Meat & Poultry Hotline. (See back cover.)

Product	Type	Internal Temperature (°F)
Beef and Veal	Ground	160
	Steak and roasts medium	160
	Steak and roasts medium rare	145
Chicken and Turkey	Breasts	170
	Ground, stuffing, and casseroles	165
	Whole bird, legs, thighs, and wings	180
Eggs	Any type	160
Fish and Shellfish	Any type	145*
Lamb	Ground	160
	Steak and roasts medium	160
	Steaks and roasts medium rare	145
Leftovers	Any type	165
Pork	Chops, fresh (raw) ham ground, ribs, and roasts	160
	Fully cooked ham (to reheat)	140

*The Food and Drug Administration recommends 145 °F or opaque and flakes with a fork.

Serving

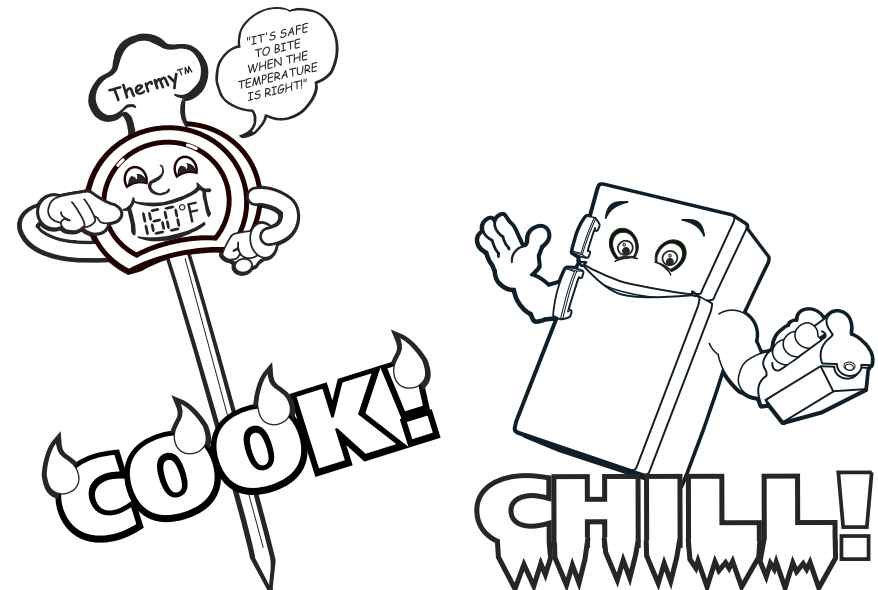
- Hot food should be held at 140 °F or warmer.
- Cold food should be held at 40 °F or colder.
- When serving food at a buffet, keep hot food hot with chafing dishes, slow cookers, and warming trays. Keep cold food cold by nesting dishes in bowls of ice or use small serving trays and replace them often.
- Use a food thermometer to check hot and cold holding temperatures.
- Perishable food should not be left out more than 2 hours at room temperature (1 hour when the temperature is above 90 °F).

Leftovers

- Discard any food left out at room temperature for more than 2 hours (1 hour if the temperature was above 90 °F).
- Place food into shallow containers and immediately put in the refrigerator or freezer for rapid cooling.
- Use most cooked leftovers within 3 to 4 days. (See chart on page 6.)

Refreezing

- Meat and poultry defrosted in the refrigerator may be refrozen before or after cooking. If thawed by other methods, cook before refreezing.



Cold Storage Chart

These storage times will help keep refrigerated (40 °F) food from spoiling or becoming dangerous to eat. Because freezing at 0 °F or below (not 32 °F) keeps food safe indefinitely, recommended freezer storage times are for quality only. Use an appliance thermometer to monitor storage temperatures in the refrigerator and freezer. For more specific information or for foods not listed here, contact the USDA Meat & Poultry Hotline or check the FSIS Web site. (See back cover.)

Preparation	Type or Description	Refrigerate (40 °F)	Freeze (0 °F)*
Beef, Lamb, Pork (Except Pre-Cooked Ham), Veal			
Corned Beef	In pouch, with pickling juices	5–7 days	Drained, 1 month
Fresh	Bacon	7 days	1 month
	Chopped, ground, hamburger, stew meat, variety meat (tongue, liver, heart, kidney, chitterlings)	1–2 days	3–4 months
	Chops, roasts, steaks	3–5 days	4–12 months
	Chops, pre-stuffed	1 day	Does not freeze well
Leftovers	Including casseroles	3–4 days	2–3 months
Ham (Pre-Cooked)			
Fully Cooked	Half	3–5 days	1–2 months
	Slices	3–4 days	1–2 months
	Whole	7 days	1–2 months
Canned Labeled “Keep Refrigerated”	Opened	3–5 days	1–2 months
	Unopened	6–9 months	Do not freeze
	Unopened, fully cooked vacuum sealed, dated	“Use-by” date	1–2 months
	Unopened, fully cooked vacuum sealed, undated	2 weeks	1–2 months
Chicken, Turkey, Other Poultry			
Fresh	Breast, pre-stuffed	1 day	Does not freeze well
	Chopped, ground, patties, giblets	1–2 days	3–4 months
	Pieces	1–2 days	9 months
	Whole	1–2 days	1 year
Leftovers	Casseroles	3–4 days	4–6 months
	Chicken nuggets, patties	1–2 days	1–3 months
	Pieces, plain or fried	3–4 days	4 months
	Pieces in broth or gravy	1–2 days	6 months

continued on next page

Cold Storage Chart (continued)

Preparation	Type or Description	Refrigerate (40 °F)	Freeze (0 °F)*
Eggs			
Fresh	In shell	3–5 weeks	Do not freeze
	Yolk, whites	2–4 days	1 year
Leftovers	Casserole, quiche, omelet	3–4 days	2 months
	Hard-cooked	1 week	Does not freeze well
Opened	Liquid pasteurized eggs, egg substitutes	3 days	Does not freeze well
Unopened	Liquid pasteurized eggs, egg substitutes	10 days	1 year
Sausages, Lunch Meats			
Hard Sausage	Jerky sticks, pepperoni,	2–3 weeks	1–2 months
Raw Sausage	Beef, chicken, pork, turkey	1–2 days	1–2 months
Smoked Sausage	Breakfast links, patties	7 days	1–2 months
Lunch Meat	Deli-sliced or store-prepared	3–5 days	1–2 months
Opened	Hot dogs	1 week	1–2 months
	Lunch meat—vacuum-packed, sliced	3–5 days	1–2 months
	Summer sausage labeled “keep refrigerated”	3 weeks	1–2 months
	Hot dogs	2 weeks	1–2 months
Unopened	Lunch meat—vacuum-packed, sliced	2 weeks	1–2 months
	Summer sausage labeled “keep refrigerated”	3 months	1–2 months
Seafood			
Fresh	Fish	1–2 days	3–8 months
	Shellfish	1–2 days	3–12 months
Leftovers	Fish and shellfish	3–4 days	3 months
Miscellaneous			
Frozen Dinners and Entrees	“Keep frozen”	Unsafe to thaw	3–4 months
Mayonnaise	Commercial, “refrigerate after opening”	2 months	Do not freeze
Other Leftovers	Gravy and meat broth	1–2 days	2–3 months
	Pizza	3–4 days	1–2 months
	Soups and stews	3–4 days	2–3 months
	Stuffing	3–4 days	1 month
Salads	Egg, chicken, ham, macaroni, tuna (store-prepared, homemade)	3–5 days	Does not freeze well

* Because freezing at 0 °F keeps food safe indefinitely, recommended storage times are for quality only.

For More Food Safety Information, Contact:

USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline

1-888-MPHotline (1-888-674-6854)

TTY: 1-800-256-7072

E-mail: mph hotline.fsis@usda.gov

Visit the Web: www.fsis.usda.gov

At the Web site, you can “Ask Karen.” FSIS automated response system can provide food safety information 24/7.



United States Department of Agriculture

Food Safety and Inspection Service

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